

Friday, March 3, 2006

Board to Meet on Marine and Aviation Accidents

Two items are on the agenda for the Safety Board's Tuesday, March 7, public meeting, which will begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Board Room and Conference Center. The Board will consider reports of investigations into the following marine and aviation accidents.

On March 6, 2004, the small passenger vessel Lady D, a pontoon water taxi with 2 crewmen and 23 passengers on board, was traversing Baltimore Harbor when it encountered a rapidly developing storm with high winds. The vessel capsized, killing 5 of those aboard.

Later that month, on March 23, 2004, an Era Aviation Sikorsky S-76A++ helicopter crashed into the Gulf of Mexico, killing all 10 persons on board.

A live and archived webcast of the proceedings will be available on the Board's web site at <http://www.nts.gov>. A summary of the Board's final reports, including findings, probable causes, and safety recommendations, will appear on the web site shortly after the meeting ends. The full reports will appear on the web site several weeks later.

Acting Chairman to Testify Before Congress on Reauthorization

Every 3 years, legislation is introduced in Congress to reauthorize the Safety Board. Through this legislation, Congress makes changes to the Board's statutory authority and authorizes annual appropriations for the agency (the actual appropriation occurs each fiscal year through the Appropriations Committee). The Safety Board is currently authorized through fiscal year 2006, and legislation is expected to be introduced that will authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2007 through 2009.

The Subcommittee on Aviation of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on reauthorization of the Board on Wednesday, March 8, 2006, at 10:00 a.m. Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker will testify. He will describe recent activities and accomplishments of the Board and propose legislation asking Congress to consider adjustments to the legislative language that establishes the Safety Board and governs certain agency activities. The testimony will be posted on the Board's web site after the hearing. The Senate is expected to hold a reauthorization hearing in the spring.



Encouraging Federal Careers in Transportation Safety

On February 24, Member Engleman Connors met with graduate students and their sponsor from the Master in Public Administration program at Southern Illinois University. The students expressed interest in aviation careers, including airport management and aviation planning. "With a significant segment of our Nation's current workforce nearing retirement eligibility, our country must be preparing for the next generation of professionals in all levels of government," Engleman Connors noted. "I particularly encourage you to look into the opportunities in the Federal government, especially those in the transportation safety field," she stated. Tom Haueter, Deputy Director of the Office of Aviation Safety, briefed the group about the office's domestic and international activities and provided a tour of the Board's aviation laboratories.

Member Ellen Engleman Connors and Southern Illinois University graduate students Sarah Triplett, Dustin Sievers, and Justin Bryant. Not pictured is Gary Shafer, the group's sponsor.

Outreach to Business Travelers

Against a backdrop of increases in fractional ownership of aircraft and the chartering of transportation services, particularly in the motor carrier and aviation sectors, Member Ellen Engleman Conners met with the President and CEO of the National Business Travel Association (NBTA), Ms. Suzanne Fletcher, and with NBTA's Executive Director and COO, Mr. Bill Connors, on February 23. Issues discussed included airspace capacity, the potential increase in the use of micro-jets, the use of pilot experience as a differentiating marketing tactic in general aviation, and charter bus safety. "Organizations and individuals need to take transportation safety into consideration in every phase of travel planning," Engleman Conners stated. "Every conference, family outing, and commute to and from work can be made safer with increased attention to transportation safety," she added.

Acquisition Year in Review

The Acquisition Division (AD-20) in the Office of Administration has concluded its third annual customer survey, and the results are in! The survey, conducted between October 31 and November 25, 2005, achieved a more than 60 percent response rate and showed a steady increase in customer satisfaction. The accompanying summary table compares survey results from FY 2003 and FY 2004 to those in FY 2005.

AD-20 also assumed management of two programs during FY 2005: purchase cards and incoming inter-agency agreements (IAAs). The purchase card program encompasses more than 160 cardholders and 2,700 transactions valued at nearly \$1 million. In addition to developing and implementing new procedures, the division conducted cardholder training, random cardholder audits, and a restructuring of "Approving Official" training. The IAA program comprises more than 30 agreements valued at nearly \$3 million.

Additional information is available on the Board's Intranet website at <http://inside/financmat/acquisition.htm>.

Acquisition Summary

	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005
Customer Survey			
Timeliness.....	21%	80%.....	98%
Quality.....	49%	88%.....	94%
Leadership.....	N/A	91%.....	100%
Service/Partnership.....	30%	84%.....	95%
Strategic Value.....	30%.....	78%.....	93%
Technology.....	0%.....	76%.....	85%
Overall Satisfaction...	33%	84%.....	93%
Actions Awarded.....	288	309.....	406
Dollars Awarded.....	\$6.9M	\$8.1M.....	\$9.5M

In Memoriam: Brian Fiffick

Brian Fiffick of the Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance was killed in a fatal car accident on Saturday, February 25, 2006, near Woodbridge, Virginia. Brian joined the Safety Board in February 1999 as the Manager of Disaster Services, serving as the Safety Board's primary liaison to the American Red Cross. He responded to many of the Board's most challenging accidents, including EgyptAir flight 990, Alaska Airlines flight 261, and the crash of American Airlines flight 587. In addition, Brian provided extensive support and assistance to regional investigators on numerous general aviation accidents and to investigators in all other modes of transportation. Brian had an integral role in fulfilling the Safety Board's mandate to provide assistance to victims and their family members following major transportation accidents. He will be missed by his many friends and colleagues at the Board and by those he helped during difficult times. A remembrance ceremony will be held for Brian on Monday, March 6, at 10:00 a.m. in the Board Room.

